Impact Of Web Technologies On The Student-Lecturer Expert Power Relationship

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ABSTRACT

Expert power is that which "comes from having knowledge and expertise in a particular area" (Nazarko, 2004). In the history of the development of higher education, the relationship between the lecturer and the students has changed because of many different factors. Before the Internet and web revolution, the lecturer was the main source of information for his or her students. The web as a modern source of knowledge is now used universally, and this spreading trend may affect the relationship between the lecturer and his students. Understanding the impact of this change appears to be important for improving teaching techniques. Thus, many studies have focused on the effect on students and lecturers of using Internet and web applications. These studies have widely investigated this impact on students' achievements and attitude, and have also shown how the role and performance of faculty have changed.

This paper aims to investigate this issue from the students' perspective: what is the impact of using web resources as a source of knowledge on the student-lecturer relationship? How has the fact that students now gain knowledge from websites affected the relationship with the lecturer as a knowledgeable person, that is, the one with the expert power? The participants were 1661 students from 30 universities/educational institutions. The Teacher Power Use Scale (TPUS) was used to collected data along with an open-ended questionnaire. Predictive Analytics Software (PASW) was used to analyze the data, and a thematic analysis was used to analyze data from the open-ended questionnaire.

Keywords: Power; Expert Power; TPUS; PASW; Thematic Analysis

INTRODUCTION

Expert power is the ability to provide another with needed information, knowledge, or expert advice which comes from experience or education (Coon & Mitterer, 2008; Nazarko, 2004; Phillips & Gully, 2011). Lecturers should have enough knowledge about the subject to qualify them for their position. However, websites as a source of knowledge have been shown to expand students' knowledge (Grace-Martin & Gay, 2001). This situation indicates that the cognitive gap between students and lecturers may be changing; yet lecturer expert power is important because it can provide students with the confidence and enthusiasm to learn (Savage & Savage, 2009). This paper, which is part of a larger study designed to measure many aspects of the impact of website technologies on the student-lecturer relationship, focuses on the expert power relationship.

Whereas other researchers have shown the impact of web use on lecturers and students separately (Al-Ghaith, Sanzogni & Sandhu, 2010; Altraounah, 2012; Alturki & Alfadda, 2007; BritishCouncil, 2011; Sait, Al-Tawil, Khan, & Faheemuddin, 2008), this study focuses on how web use affects the relationship between student and lecturer. These previous studies, though they do not share exactly the same focus as the current study, have served as background research for this study.

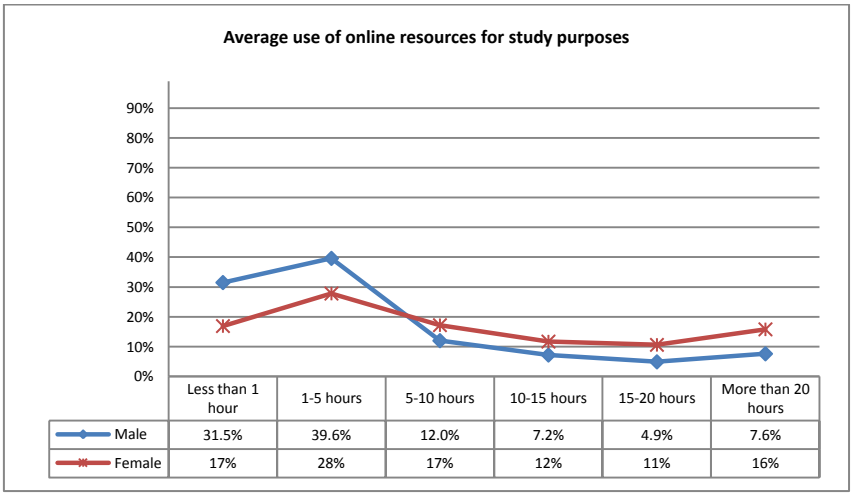
METHODOLOGY

A semi-structured questionnaire was distributed to a wide range of students in higher education to gather data about their experience of using web technology in their education.

The TPUS instrument, with minor amendments, was used to measure how students' knowledge from using websites has affected their relationship with their lecturer as a knowledgeable person. The instrument consisted of seven-point Likert-scale questions. An open-ended question was added to obtain possible reasons why students think that websites either affect or do not affect their relationship with their lecturers. In total, responses from 1,361 out of 1,661 participants were accepted as valid, 969 being males and 377 females (15 did not mention their gender). PASW was used to analyze the closed-ended questions, and thematic analysis was used to analyze the open-ended question.

RESULTS

As shown in Figure 1, the use of web pages for study purposes is quite minimal among students of both genders. More than 60% of students use websites for 1-5 hours or less per month. However, even this relatively low amount of use has affected their association with their lecturers in terms of their perception of the lecturer as a knowledgeable person. The results show a noticeable impact on the student-lecturer relationship because of the students' access to online knowledge resources, with only a small difference between males and females. In general, the level of impact among females is slightly higher compared to that of males.



	Less than 1 hour	1-5 hours	5-10 hours	10-15 hours	15-20 hours	More than 20 hours
Male	31.5%	39.6%	12.0%	7.2%	4.9%	7.6%
Female	17%	28%	17%	12%	11%	16%

Figure 1: Average Use of Online Resources for Study Purposes per Month

Figure 2 shows that the student-lecturer relationship is affected when students rely on websites to find necessary information. The impact is rated on a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 meaning "no impact" and 7 being "high impact." These results came from analyzing the Likert-scale, closed-ended questions, for which 1 meant "strongly disagree" and 7 meant "strongly agree."

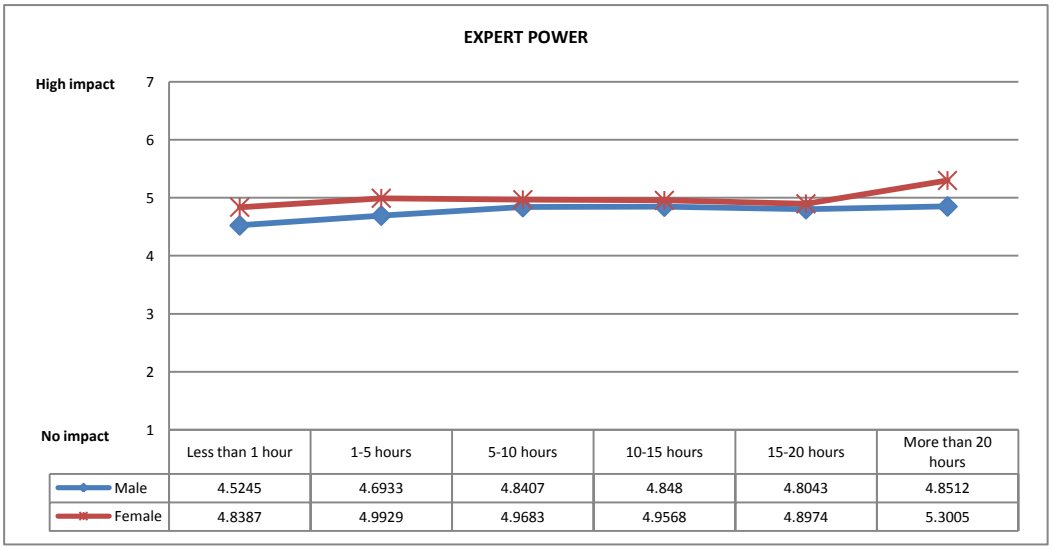


Figure 2: Level of Impact of Websites on Student-Lecturer Expert Power

Table 1 explains the results of the open-ended question that was attached to the end of the questionnaire to ascertain, if possible, the reasons for the change in the student-lecturer relationship. The answers to this question are summarized to provide the main reasons from the students' perspective. Table 1 demonstrates that the male and female justifications are fairly consistent in terms of their proportions. Of the males, 6.81% - and 10.61% of the females - believe that their relationship and interaction with their lecturers has declined because they believe that the information they gain from the Internet is better organized and more easily delivered. In addition, 5.47% of the males and 9.28% females believe that websites have more detailed information. Students can evaluate their lecturers' knowledge by comparing Internet information to what their lecturers present in class. Thus, 2.06% males and 5.04% females justified their desire to search for information on the Internet by alluding to their lecturers' limited knowledge. For quite similar reasons, 2.68% males and 3.71% females have confidence in knowledge from the Internet, which they consider to be more accurate, updated, and important than their lecturers' information. Some students also mentioned that their lecturers were not available when needed. This, however, was a relatively minor reason as less than 1% of the students mentioned it.

Table 1: Why Using Websites has Affected the Student-Lecturer Expert Power Relationship

Reasons Why Students Feel That Websites Affect Their Relationship With Their Lecturers	Gender	
	Male	Female
Information is available on the Internet.	0.72%	1.33%
The Internet information is better organized and more easily delivered.	6.81%	10.61%
The Internet contains more resources or greater variety of information.	1.96%	3.98%
The Internet has more detailed information.	5.47%	9.28%
The Internet information is more accurate, updated, and important.	2.68%	3.71%
The Internet has more evidence and is more trustworthy.	1.03%	2.39%
The lecturer is not available or does not have time to answer questions.	1.65%	2.12%
The lecturer's knowledge is limited or his/her information delivery is not comprehensive.	2.06%	5.04%
The lecturer is not available (the Internet is the second choice).	0.21%	0.53%
The lecturer does not speak the language clearly.	0.31%	0%
The student lacks the confidence to ask the lecturer.	0.10%	0%
The Internet is always available and information can be reviewed (i.e., it is quicker).	0.52%	1.06%
The lecturer is restricted to specific information (i.e., the course material).	0.31%	0.27%

The results show that a minority of students believe that the information from websites does not affect their relationship with their lecturers. As shown in Table 2, of the males, 2.17% - along with 3.71% of females - believe that the lecturer provides them with more accurate and trustworthy information. They consider most of the information on the internet as an unknown source and, hence, not trustworthy. A similar percentage of students considers the lecturer's information as more accurate and up-to-date than what is available online.

Table 2: Why Using Websites has NOT Affected the Student-Lecturer Expert Power Relationship

Reasons Students Feel That Internet Websites Do Not Affect Their Relationship With Their Lecturers	Gender	
	Male	Female
The lecturer has the information.	0.21%	0.8%
The lecturer's information is more organized and easily delivered.	3.41%	2.92%
The lecturer has more detailed or enough information.	1.34%	2.92%
The lecturer's information is more accurate, updated, and more important.	1.86%	3.71%
The lecturer has more evidence and is more trustworthy or the internet is not trustworthy.	2.17%	3.71%
The lecturer is not available or does not have time to answer questions.	0.41%	0%
The internet language is difficult to read or to understand.	0.1%	0%
Either Internet access is unavailable or the information is not available on the internet.	0.31%	0.27%
Interaction with the lecturer is important.	1.75%	1.59%
There is no difference in the information provided by the lecturer and the internet.	0.21%	0.27%

CONCLUSION

Previous research has shown the importance of the student-lecturer expert power relationship and how the lecturer's expert knowledge affects students' confidence in their ability to succeed in their study, as well as their enthusiasm for it. Studies have also proven that student access to online resources increases student knowledge. The results of this research paper show that online resources are negatively affecting the students' perception of lecturer expert power. This paper shows that the student-lecturer relationship is changing with regard to expert power because of students' access to online resources and it illustrates the main reasons that have led to the weakening of this relationship.

In terms of the practical application of this research, the role of lecturer should not be focused merely on providing knowledge because knowledge is now often globally available. Each of the reasons mentioned in Table 1 should be considered in training higher education lecturers to avoid the weakening of lecturer expert power in the classroom.

AUTHOR INFORMATION

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